

Newport Town Council  
Meeting Minutes  
October 17, 2019

Pledge of Allegiance.

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mayor Michael Spencer and he announced that the meeting was in compliance with the Delaware Open Meeting Act.

Attendance: Mayor Michael Spencer, Vice Mayor John Joswick, Town Manager Wendy King, Police Chief Mark Wohner, Commissioner Michele MacDonald, Commissioner CarolAnn Gretz, Commissioner Flo Czerwinski and Solicitor Chris Griffiths.

Minutes from the meeting of September 19, 2019, were approved via motion by Vice Mayor Joswick and seconded by Commissioner MacDonald. All ayes.

Correspondence: Mayor Spencer received a letter from Senator Tom Carper to thank him for his participation in a tour of the bike path.

Town Manager's Report - Veteran's Day celebration. Meeting with Gordon Woodrow from DNREC about stormwater management good housekeeping follow up. Board of Adjustment appointment candidates. Falco subdivision application. Morgan Stanley closed out an account relating to the old police pension investment account because the amount was too small for them to manage, so they mailed us a check and it was forwarded to the state pension account. Two FOIA requests were received and responded to. A private citizen wanted the last three audits and employee salary information; a media representative requested several years of audits and budgets in response to a "tip" that the town owes an outstanding debt to the victims' compensation fund and an article was written. I have been working with Dan McMurray from WSFS regarding terms for a capital loan and line of credit. FY20 budget will be presented next month - a tax increase will be proposed. Average tax bill calculation was presented for a 10% increase and a 15% increase.

Commissioner MacDonald asked about the location of the subdivision application. Answers to last month's question regarding ADA sidewalk designs and difference in cost were provided.

Commissioner Gretz asked if it was policy for the mayor to select the new Board of Adjustment members. Solicitor Griffiths advised that it was in our charter and code that the mayor appoints those members. After a bit of discussion, it was clarified that council will participate in and vote on the members.

Commissioner MacDonald asked for confirmation that the WSFS loan/line of credit was for the road and for state debt. Town Manager King also mentioned that the landfill fees will increase 54% beginning in January. Mayor Spencer mentioned the fact that Frank Walker took the commissioners to the Ayre Street location and talked about the drainage issues there. The drainage problems need to be resolved prior to contracting the get the road done as it should last 20 years. Mayor Spencer noted that in order for the town to continue to pick up trash, he was on board for the tax increase. It was explained to council that Waste Management was not trying to make a profit on the town, but to try to recoup their costs to service the town's trash. Mayor Spencer asked Mr. Walker if he had any additional comments regarding Ayre Street. He noted that there are areas that don't have sidewalks and were we required to make them accessible. The answer is yes.

Vice Mayor Joswick commented that residents in surrounding areas were already being charged at an increased amount for trash.

Commissioner Gretz asked about drainage and questioned the fact that W. Ayre Street has more drainage than E. Ayre Street and could the state/county possibly assist.

Police Chief's Report - Monthly statistics for September, 2019. Question from last meeting. IN discussion with Richey to rearrange car line. 10/24/19 -Trunk and Treat with Boy and Girls after school program - 5:30 - 7:30. Received shirt sizes to proceed with spirit wear purchase for Richey School. Mayor Spencer will be asking business people for donations toward the shirts.

Alderman's Report - \$34,573 in court fines.

Maintenance Report - Met with engineers regarding Ayre Street. Discussion about water problem from 141. One sewer pump was down but has been repaired. Joe Chambers fixed storm drain on W. Ayre Street. Mr. Walker asked about timeline to fix S. Walnut Street storm drain that is open and needs a grate (update: We are using municipal street aid funds to fix - approx. \$6,000).

Code Enforcement - Mr. Walker was recovering from surgery for two weeks/ Regular issues. Santillanta's had a car on the road with no door and no hood, but was removed. That particular business has cars parked all up and down the street. Mayor Spencer mentioned the possibility of a specific parking ordinance. Mr. Walker thought that their business license should be in jeopardy.

Solicitor's Report - Working on draft property maintenance ordinance. It has been tabled for the time being - comments are still coming in. Assisted with two FOIA requests, a document inspection request, an employment issue that is moving forward. Sprint has returned their signed agreement to expand their presence on the monopole. A workshop will be conducted when the new Board of Adjustment people are appointed.

Public Comment: Mary Ryan, Mary Street, questioned the trash increase - where did that figure come from? Are we going out to other companies to compare prices and speaking to other cities/towns? Town Manager King advised that Waste Management approached her with the reality that they would have to begin charging a service fee to continue servicing the town. As explained earlier in the evening, the fees are not profit-bearing for Waste Management - they are simply trying to recoup their costs as it appears as they are losing money by serving Newport by only charging tipping fees. Cost comparisons were done five years ago and were way off the mark back then. In reviewing with other towns who utilize Waste Management as their hauler, they are being charged more and Waste Management is still the best dollar value. Commissioner Gretz asked if they were receiving a tax incentive for serving the town and Mayor Spencer was not able to confirm that as the town is not privy to their accounting mechanisms. They are still willing to do the two bulk pickups a year.

Bill Lower, Harvey Hanna, commented that the subsidy provided by Waste Management was extraordinary and that this service fee is completely reasonable. He asked about leaf collection - the town maintenance takes care of that. Operation Warm will be held Friday, 11/8/19, across from tavern. Over the last three years, over 5000 brand new coats have been distributed to 10 elementary schools, providing coats to children who quite possibly never received a new coat. 😞 He thanked the town.

Barbara McNally, Ayre Street, had questions about the victims' compensation debt as she has clients who have utilized the funds. She wanted to know why the town was behind and how are they going to catch up. There

have been two significant payments made in the last month. The town is in debt to the state, not the victims. They are still receiving funding from the state regardless of our debt. The town had some lean years and a division was consistently over budget and we lost money. This was debt that was in place upon the arrival of Town Manager King, prior to 2003. This was a consistent comment on our audits. Aside from this debt, the town does not have any other debt and hasn't for the last 14 years.

Joe Stagliano, Stonehurst, thanked the town for placing signs up near his home. People are stopping now. Quotes for speed bumps were obtained and would be considered if the residents wanted. Mayor Spencer suggested the temporary ones to see if they liked them. Mr. Walker inquired about borrowing a traffic counter from DelDOT to determine the most used roads. Chief Wohner advised to just call them because the police department has the rollout speed bumps in case the stop signs are being run.

Old business - Property Maintenance Ordinance will be tabled temporarily. Mr. Walker commented that two good Samaritans cut the grass at 309 E. Justis Street. Mayor Spencer was aware and thanked the one person because we are not able to allow the maintenance employees to do it.

Executive Session - 7:51 pm

Return to Regular Session at 8:01 pm.

Mayor Spencer made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner MacDonald seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 pm.

